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UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

Memorandum

TO : Director of Training

DATE: 17 June 1965

FROM : Chief, Language Training School

SUBJECT: Weekly Activities Report No. 14

A. SIGNIFICANT ITEMS

None to report.

B. OTHER ACTIVITIES

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1. [REDACTED] visited Language Laboratories, Inc. on Tuesday to look at some basic, short programmed materials in Spanish and French. At first examination these materials look good enough to experiment with as a possible means of satisfying some of our low-level requirements.

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2. [REDACTED], ORD/S&T, paid a visit to C/LTS and [REDACTED] with a view to "picking their brains" regarding the feasibility of certain ideas of interest to his component. One of these is the possibility of developing a "language diction" program aimed at identifying the regions from which individuals come through their pronunciation of key words in their speech. [REDACTED] also sought opinions on various linguistic scholars throughout the country who might be helpful, should such a project be set up.

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3. One SR Officer began part-time Basic Russian (RSW) training on a six-hours weekly basis. Regular daytime staff resources are being used.

4. On Friday, 18 June, the Voluntary Language Training Program German 102 class will be terminated with two students left out of the original five. Tutorial training was not deemed necessary for these two students.

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5. [REDACTED] will begin his summer training program at Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan, on 21 June. In the eight weeks he will be there he will study IciBemba (the Language of Zambia), general linguistics and African linguistics.

DOCUMENT NO. _____

NO CHANGE IN CLASS. ☒☐ DECLASSIFIED

CLASS. CHANGED TO: TS S C

NEXT REVIEW DATE: 2017

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6. Six students (2 classes) of French and three instructors completed three days at [REDACTED] on 16 June.

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7. Four students in French finished the Basic Course this week. Their departure will not reduce the number of classes being conducted since all four have, in the course of the 20-week period, been reassigned to classes compatible with their respective aptitudes and levels of proficiency.

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8. A copy of [REDACTED] evaluation of overseas language training program course in Mandarin Chinese for the Defense Language Institute is enclosed for your information.

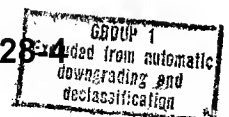


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Attachment:

As stated in para.8

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4 June 1965

Evaluation of Overseas Language Training Program
Course in Mandarin Chinese.

I am returning herewith the copy of your Overseas Language Training Program course in Mandarin Chinese.

In commenting on this course, I am going to go far beyond a simple critique of the course, since it seems to me that some rethinking is needed in the concept of the program as a whole. If this is not what you wanted, simply ignore my general comments.

Firstly, the time period allotted. It should be clearly recognized that in any given period, an English-speaking student can go further in the learning of Spanish than he will in Russian, and both these will make much more rapid progress than the student of Chinese. Thus, after three months, the typical student may have a fairly creditable grasp of Spanish, while still being rather shaky in Russian and barely started in Chinese. This may have been considered in the original planning, and in a sense the results are comparable. People speaking any Chinese at all, or not very fluent Russian, are probably as rare in their respective assignments as fairly good speakers of Spanish are in their assignments.

Secondly, even though the allotted period may be inadequate, the course must serve as a basis for those who are going on to further study of the language. Thus what is taught must be taught thoroughly and accurately so that the student does not form incorrect speech patterns that he will have to unlearn later.

Finally, the course must be such that it can be taught by the average overseas instructor. Unfortunately, this usually means a native speaker "off the street," so to speak, with little or no knowledge of modern language

teaching methods. As was found in the USAFI materials in World War II, this demands a carefully prepared and voluminous instructor's manual.

The sum of these recommendations is that a course must be prepared differing completely from anything ever attempted before, with the exception of the USAFI materials already mentioned. It also means, unfortunately, that the materials prepared at DLIWC can hardly serve the purpose. These materials would be fine for use at an installation manned and equipped like DLI. Even though equipment comparable to that at DLI could be made available overseas, there is no hope of getting comparable instructors. The inescapable conclusion is that a new start must be made.

The above comments probably apply equally to the courses in other languages. The writers of all the courses undoubtedly produced a series of materials similar to those they have been producing for use at DLI. They could hardly have been expected to do otherwise without an extensive briefing based on a complete rethinking of the problems involved. Such a rethinking would lead to the following conclusions:

1) The course must concentrate on the problems of the English speaker. For example, the Chinese auxiliary verb is structurally almost identical with the English. Thus auxiliary verbs may be introduced unsystematically, whenever needed. The student need only be given the meanings of the auxiliary verbs as they occur, and virtually no drill is required on this point. The resultative compound, on the other hand, needs systematic presentation and extensive drill. It is a very productive Chinese structure but resembles nothing in the structure of English.

2) When the structures that need to be taught have been isolated and listed, they must be programmed into a basic course outline. They must be introduced and mastered one at a time, and should be arranged in an order based on their usefulness as against their difficulty for the English speaker. These criteria often conflict. The resultative compound mentioned above should be presented early on the criterion of usefulness. On the other hand, it differs

completely from any English structure, which is an argument in favor of not presenting it early. The point being made in this paragraph should be obvious, but no course has yet been written in Chinese that takes this factor adequately into account. Various courses I have seen present the resultative compound as early as the first lesson or as late as the twenty-first lesson out of twenty-four. The OLTP course presents it about two-thirds of the way through the course, which is not unreasonable. However, the course as a whole does not seem to have been thoroughly programmed before writing was begun.

3) Another point that should be obvious. The explanations of Chinese structure should be accurate. However, no course yet produced has given linguistically accurate descriptions of the so-called "coverb", of the verb-object combination, or the use of the verb ba as a marker of the direct object. Here again, a reexamination of the structure of Chinese from a sound linguistic viewpoint is needed.

4) The format for the course materials should be studied. Again what is suitable for DLI may not be usable in OLTP courses. Two suggestions for consideration are:

a) whether the dialogues should be more in the form of connected exchanges that one might actually hear between two Chinese conversing together.

b) the extent of drills necessary. Remembering that the instructor is likely to be inexperienced, at least in the more modern techniques, the course should at least outline every drill that is to be used. It takes an experienced instructor to develop from simple recombination drills the immense amount of material that the student needs for really learning a structure. A tremendous amount of work in writing and taping drills must be done before the course can be taught by instructors like those who are available overseas. Robert Lado's Language Learning -- A Scientific Approach can be very helpful in giving some idea of what is needed.

A final consideration for the Chinese course is which romanization to use. The Yale romanization is used in most civilian and service schools because the best currently available materials are the Yale Mirror Series. However, it is useful only as long as the student is in school. When he starts to use Chinese in the field, the only romanization he is likely to encounter is the Wade-Giles. Furthermore, if the field instructors know any romanization at all, it will be the Wade-Giles. Admittedly, it is not as elegant a romanization as the Yale, but it is thoroughly usable. The Pin-Yin advocated by the Chinese Communists and the Nationalist Gwoyeu Romatzyh have both been used in teaching Chinese. Neither of them has any wide acceptance. I have yet to see a case (except in teaching materials) where either of them has been used without accompanying characters, or Wade-Giles romanization to make clear what is meant. It might be considered worthwhile to familiarize the student with all three of these romanizations. However, a three-month course must be pared to the bone, so the "modern" romanizations might well be left for the intermediate student.

I must end with an apology for what is a drastic criticism of a course that has involved a large amount of work by many devoted people. I shudder to think of their reaction and the effect on their morale when they are asked to start over, virtually from the beginning. However, I gather from the comments that were made when I was asked to evaluate the course that my opinion will not come as a great surprise to HQDLI. In any event, it is better to face realistically the necessity for redoing the material now, rather than trying to make do with it in an OLTP that would thereby be doomed to inadequacy if not to failure.

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